



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
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COACHES VALUE PRESEASON

*"Preseason games provide the best atmosphere to help our team get ready for the regular season and to judge the talents of new players," says Indianapolis Colts head coach **TONY DUNGY** in anticipation of the first mandatory roster cutdown. "You have to see how people will react in these competitive situations to properly put your team together."*

FIRST CUTDOWN LOOMS AS NFL FEATURES FIVE NATIONAL TV GAMES

Two weeks to go, two weeks to show.

That is the equation in the NFL at this point. With two weeks of preseason left, time to impress the coaches is short. If you're on the bubble, it's time to get off it, quick. The first mandatory cutdown of rosters is next Tuesday, August 30 at 4:00 PM ET.

"I'm always nervous," says eight-year NFL defensive end **BERTRAND BERRY** of the Arizona Cardinals about cutdown day. "I'm always on eggshells. You try not to think about it, but you can't help it. This is your career, your livelihood."

NFL fans can see the drama play out this week in five national television games, and in 12 "look-in" games on NFL Network. The "look-in" games allow fans to see developing action around the league.

The 12 "look-in" games on NFL Network this week:

Friday, August 26 at 7:30 PM ET – 8 games. Time on air: 2 ½ hours.

Cincinnati @ Philadelphia	Baltimore @ New Orleans	Buffalo @ Chicago
Carolina @ Cleveland	New England @ Green Bay	NY Jets @ NY Giants
San Diego @ Minnesota	Pittsburgh @ Washington	

Saturday, August 27 at 8:00 PM ET – 4 games. Time on air: 3 hours.

Tampa Bay @ Miami	Houston @ Dallas	Seattle @ Kansas City
Indianapolis @ Denver		

The national TV games in Week 3:

- **ATLANTA at JACKSONVILLE (Thursday, ESPN, 8:00 PM ET):** Two of the most exciting young quarterbacks in the NFL will be on the field, and they feel like they've got work to do.

For the Falcons, there's All-Star **MICHAEL VICK**, who believes that the key to his preseason is to establish reliability and productivity with his receiving corps, such as **DEZ WHITE**, **MICHAEL JENKINS** and **PEERLESS PRICE**. Also thrown in that mix is this year's first-round draft choice **RODDY WHITE** from Alabama-Birmingham.

"They haven't had a chance to play as a unit for four quarters," says Vick. "Once they get that opportunity, then we'll see how far we have come since 2004."

For quarterback **BYRON LEFTWICH** and the Jaguars, Thursday will be one more chance to perfect the new vertical offense installed by new offensive coordinator **CARL SMITH**.

"Carl is the biggest free-agent acquisition in a long time for us," says veteran Jaguars receiver **JIMMY SMITH**. "The vertical routes open everything underneath in order for the other receivers to work in the middle,"

- **PITTSBURGH at WASHINGTON (Friday, FOX, 8:00 PM ET):** The longest-serving active head coach, and a Super Bowl-winning coach. And both are worried.

On paper, **BILL COWHER** – in his 15th year at Pittsburgh's helm – and the Steelers should be just fine-tuning for

the season. They have a 14-game regular-season winning streak; the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year at quarterback, **BEN ROETHLISBERGER**; and now their top receiver, **HINES WARD**, is back.

But...“the biggest concern I have for this year,” says Cowher, “is making sure we understand that we aren’t going to just pick up where we left off.”

For the Redskins, head coach **JOE GIBBS** is not worried about overconfidence, he is concerned about turning around a club that finished 30th in the league in offense last year. That is why Gibbs brought in new quarterbacks coach **BILL MUSGRAVE** to tutor starter **PATRICK RAMSEY** and install the shotgun; plans to use running back **CLINTON PORTIS** more; and acquired speedy wide receiver **SANTANA MOSS**.

“It’s important to evaluate things from last year and see what happened,” says Gibbs. He’s ready for changes.

- **TENNESSEE at SAN FRANCISCO (Friday, NFL Network, 10:00 PM ET):** The 49ers take the field for the first time since the tragic death of their first-year guard Thomas Herrion, who collapsed and died in the locker room following last Saturday night’s game in Denver.

A slimmed-down **STEVE MC NAIR** and a still-learning **ALEX SMITH** will be two of the featured players in this meeting.

McNair, the NFL co-MVP with **PEYTON MANNING** in 2003, reported to camp 25 pounds lighter after chest surgery. Waiting was Titans’ new offensive coordinator **NORM CHOW** in his first NFL role after 30 years in college coaching. Part of Chow’s offense will take advantage of McNair’s scampering ability with planned rollouts.

McNair is ready. “We don’t think this is a rebuilding stage,” he says. “We expect to execute each week.”

For the ‘Niners, the battle for the starting quarterback position between Smith, the NFL’s No 1 overall draft selection this year, and six-year veteran **TIM RATTAY** will continue. “It’s good to be out there,” says Smith. “It’s obviously a different atmosphere than I am used to.”

- **INDIANAPOLIS at DENVER (Saturday, CBS, 8:00 PM ET):** Indianapolis has ended Denver’s season the last two years in the playoffs. In a 2003 Wild Card game, the Colts triumphed 41-10. They basically repeated the margin again last season in another Wild Card, 49-24. Ironically, the Broncos won both regular-season meetings with the Colts those years.

In addition to some solace they can gain for a win Saturday night, the Broncos will be working on other aspects of their game. Such as, who will be starting quarterback **JAKE PLUMMER**’s chief backup, **BRADLEE VAN PELT** or **MATT MAUCK**? Will their rebuilt defensive line be ready for the season? And will newcomer and NFL all-time receiver **JERRY RICE** move up from second string on the depth chart?

For the Colts, who had the No. 2 offense in the league last year thanks to the presence of NFL MVP **PEYTON MANNING**, running back **EDGERRIN JAMES** and wide receiver **MARVIN HARRISON**, it will be time to get this trio more playing time. Saturday could also see the preseason debut of 2004 NFL sack leader **DWIGHT FREENEY** (16.0), who had offseason shoulder surgery. “I would definitely like that,” says Freeney. “Just to be able to get warmed up completely so I can go into the season running full speed, with moves and everything.”

- **ST. LOUIS at DETROIT (Monday, ABC, 8:00 PM ET):** Each team packs a potent – and swift – receiving attack. For the Rams, there are the veterans **TORRY HOLT** and **ISAAC BRUCE**, the only tandem from one club to finish in the top 10 last year in catches. For the Lions, there is their young corps of wideouts – **ROY WILLIAMS**, **CHARLES ROGERS** and first-round draft choice **MIKE WILLIAMS** from USC.

In the Lions’ West Coast offense, Roy Williams is the primary receiver as a flanker, and led the club in catches last year. He does not believe, though, that teams can isolate on him. “We’ve got some weapons,” he says. “We just have to use them.”

2005 NFL ROSTER CUTDOWN DATES

DATE	ROSTER MAXIMUM
August 30	65
September 3	53

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LAST WEEK'S NFL RESULTS

Home team in CAPS

Thursday, August 18

New Orleans 37, NEW ENGLAND 27

Friday, August 19

N. Y. JETS 28, Minnesota 21

Tennessee 24, ATLANTA 21

Cincinnati 24, WASHINGTON 17

Saturday, August 20

Cleveland 21, DETROIT 13

BUFFALO 27, Green Bay 7

Jacksonville 20, TAMPA BAY 17

PITTSBURGH 17, Miami 3

Saturday, August 20 Cont'd.

N.Y. GIANTS 27, Carolina 21

Chicago 24, INDIANAPOLIS 17

HOUSTON 19, Oakland 17

Philadelphia 20, BALTIMORE 14

Arizona 24, KANSAS CITY 17

DENVER 26, San Francisco 21

Sunday, August 21

SAN DIEGO 36, St. Louis 21

Monday, August 22

Dallas 18, SEATTLE 10

<u>AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE</u>							<u>NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE</u>						
<u>East Division</u>							<u>East Division</u>						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Buffalo	2	0	0	1.000	44	17	Dallas	1	1	0	.500	29	23
N.Y. Jets	2	0	0	1.000	38	24	N.Y. Giants	1	1	0	.500	41	38
New England	1	1	0	.500	50	50	Philadelphia	1	1	0	.500	51	52
Miami	0	3	0	.000	44	71	Washington	0	2	0	.000	27	52
<u>North Division</u>							<u>North Division</u>						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Cleveland	2	0	0	1.000	38	27	Chicago	2	1	0	.667	64	58
Pittsburgh	2	0	0	1.000	55	34	Green Bay	1	1	0	.500	17	34
Cincinnati	1	1	0	.500	37	40	Minnesota	1	1	0	.500	48	44
Baltimore	0	2	0	.000	17	36	Detroit	0	2	0	.000	16	31
<u>South Division</u>							<u>South Division</u>						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Jacksonville	2	0	0	1.000	47	34	Atlanta	2	1	0	.667	64	48
Houston	1	1	0	.500	33	37	Carolina	1	1	0	.500	49	37
Tennessee	1	1	0	.500	41	41	New Orleans	1	1	0	.500	52	61
Indianapolis	0	3	0	.000	48	68	Tampa Bay	1	1	0	.500	37	37
<u>West Division</u>							<u>West Division</u>						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Denver	2	0	0	1.000	46	35	Arizona	2	0	0	1.000	37	28
San Diego	1	1	0	.500	43	31	St. Louis	1	1	0	.500	38	49
Kansas City	0	2	0	.000	33	51	San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	42	39
Oakland	0	2	0	.000	30	40	Seattle	1	1	0	.500	44	33

THIS WEEK'S NFL SCHEDULE (AUGUST 25-29)

(All times local)

Thursday, August 25

Atlanta at Jacksonville, 8:00 (ESPN)

Friday, August 26

Pittsburgh at Washington, 8:00 (FOX)

Cincinnati at Philadelphia, 7:30

Baltimore at New Orleans, 7:00

Buffalo at Chicago, 7:00

Carolina at Cleveland, 8:00

New England at Green Bay, 7:00

N.Y. Jets at N.Y. Giants, 8:00

Friday, August 26 Cont'd.

San Diego at Minnesota, 7:00

Arizona at Oakland, 6:30

Tennessee at San Francisco, 7:00 (NFL Net)

Saturday, August 27

Indianapolis at Denver, 6:00 (CBS)

Tampa Bay at Miami, 7:30

Houston at Dallas, 7:00

Seattle at Kansas City, 7:30

Monday, August 29

St. Louis at Detroit, 8:00 (ABC)

